

PREFACE

On September 11, 2020, Brazil crossed the six-month milestone of the Covid-19 pandemic. At that time, it accounted for 130 thousand deaths among 4.2 million Brazilians infected with the coronavirus. The greatest health tragedy in Brazil is something that deeply marks the air of time.

The IBICT research group on Collaborative Production and Solidarity Economies has been publishing the P2P & Innovation Journal since 2014. It has been six years trying to bring together authors who work with peer production, Commons, solidarity economy, innovation, digital technologies, information management and knowledge organization. At the same time, we seek to build a reading public in this vast interdisciplinary field.

The publication of this regular edition of the journal requires us to look deeply into the present. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are uneven. Most Brazilians lost jobs and income: the country now has 13 million unemployed and 40 million precarious informal workers, in addition to 600,000 micro, small and medium-sized companies that closed their doors. Against the losses, 42 Brazilian billionaires increased their wealth by US \$ 34 billion (more than R \$ 180 billion) between March and July 2020.

The global economic crisis caused by the pandemic leaves half a billion people on the verge of poverty. Four hundred million jobs are gone and 430 million small businesses are at risk of bankruptcy. They are data from the Oxfam, Poder, Lucros e Pandemia report, which was launched on the eve of the global alert six months ago. The document reveals how large corporations prioritized profits over the health of society. The use of the political influence of corporations to shape the actions of governments, particularly tax benefits and exemptions and measures of social isolation, stands out.

The 100 stock market champions have added more than \$ 3 trillion to their value since the pandemic began (in March 2020). We live in an unfair in which millions of people have lost dignity, jobs and income, while a few billionaires have increased their wealth. The Oxfam report shows that the economy has only worked for a small group of people: the super-rich. The fundamental resources to guarantee the confrontation of the pandemic and the socioeconomic support of the people are ending up in the hands of a few.

The current situation combines a health tragedy with a serious social and economic crisis. An answer is needed that prioritizes support for the poor, workers and small businesses. Society must put pressure on governments and corporations to make agreements that rebalance their purposes of power and wealth. We are at a critical moment. We have a choice to make: go



Esta obra está licenciada sob uma licença

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

P2P & INOVAÇÃO, Rio de Janeiro, v. 7, n. 1, p. 6-10, set. 2020/fev. 2021.

back to the old model or learn with the crisis and design a more just society and a sustainable economy. If we don't change the order of things, inequalities will increase - in Brazil and in the world.

After three months of pandemic, when Brazil had only half of the current number of deaths caused by Covid-19, two wounds of Brazilian society were evident: profound social inequality and structural racism. All of a sudden, we discover that our population is made up of blacks and women, historically treated as minorities, as well as the poor.

The vast majority of those with jobs in Brazil earn less than two minimum wages per month and live in subhuman conditions in the peripheries, in the slums, in the tenements, on the stilts; without basic sanitation, without medical assistance, without food security. Coronavirus kills more poor and black people – not only because they are black, but because they are poor.

The large number of deaths in the peripheries of metropolitan regions is a consequence of the living conditions in these places. In the peripheries, there are more residents per household, access to piped water does not exist or is intermittent, and economic insecurity forces people to leave their home to get some money. It is worth remembering that when the pandemic started, many people said that Covid-19 would match unequal ones, as everyone would get sick, need respirators, etc. History has shown that the disease has unevenly affected the unequal, and has been increasingly harsh on the poorest. The unequal vulnerability is made clear by the impact on people who lose jobs or are unable to maintain subsistence income. It is estimated that the Covid-19 pandemic affected 80% of the workforce in Brazil (80 million people), half of whom were informal workers.

One issue that reflects this distinctive affect of the pandemic on society is the possibility of staying at home doing "social isolation". Social relations of production deeply interfere in observing the universal health orientation to reduce the levels of spread of the disease. Staying at home depends on the nature of the job, the guarantee of income, the living conditions and the existence of savings. It is easy to see that the poor, informal workers and small entrepreneurs have enormous difficulty in secluding themselves in a comfortable house with a stock of food and paying bills. It is in this context that the eyes of society turn to the main experience of minimum income: Bolsa Família.

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 quickly did something that years of political discussion in Brazil had failed to achieve: the broad social legitimation of the Bolsa Família social program. The so-called "Emergency Aid", a financial benefit granted by the Federal Government after April, is intended for informal workers, individual micro entrepreneurs, self-

employed and unemployed, with the purpose of providing emergency protection during the period of confrontation with the social and economic crisis caused by pandemic.

In September 2020 it is estimated that more than 60 million people received Emergency Aid directly. If the number of members of each family is counted, the benefit reaches more than 120 million people, that is, 60% of Brazilians. In addition to supporting families, the Aid stimulates consumption and aggregate demand. Initially expected to be paid in three installments, Emergency Aid was extended for another two months and each person can receive up to five installments. It is important to note that over 75% of those assisted in the program are from the Northeast and North regions. The benefits include 150,000 indigenous people registered with Bolsa Família.

Another major “side effect” of the Covid-19 pandemic is the enhancement of the Unified Health System, the largest universal health coverage system in the world. Before the pandemic, the neoliberal agenda was strong in Brazilian society, with the defense of the minimal state. The pandemic exposed the potential damage of the implementation of the agenda: what would have happened if we had the minimum state in force? What would Brazil do with the pandemic if we did not have SUS? In the end it was public health services, epidemiological surveillance system na the intensive care units of field hospitals, which faced the pandemic and guaranteed the defense of the lives of Brazilians.

The maintenance of the minimum income program and the Unified Health System exposes the damage caused by the neoliberal agenda, which has a fixation on fiscal balance as an indicator of success. Ensuring the survival of Brazilians, especially workers and the poor, punctures the state spending ceiling. The neoliberal “one-note samba” does not match the needs of society in an extremely unequal country threatened by a global pandemic. After two decades of blind veneration by a large part of society, the monolith of the minimal state is cracked, and can collapse. It is very clear that important demands will only be answered and satisfied by effective public policies.

When Brazilians seemed resigned to the fact that 2020 was marked exclusively by the Covid-19 pandemic, behold, the country begins to burn with flames from north to south. Brazil has been playing a leading role in the global environmental agenda since Eco-92. The Climate Observatory recalls that between 2004 and 2012 the country reduced deforestation by 80% and became the world leader in the environmental agenda. Brazil had 27,000 km² of deforestation in 2004 and reduced it to 5,000 km² in 2012. This occurred with the demarcation of territories, improvement in the capacity to implement the legislation, strengthening of the environmental inspection bodies and, above all, a clear message to fight against deforestation.

What we see at this moment is the destruction of the environmental protection and preservation policy that was built in the last 30 years. Brazil ceases to be a good example and becomes a villain of the environment, with records of deforestation, fires and mining in indigenous lands. The image of the Minister of the Environment, in April, is alive in the memory of Brazilians, suggesting “stopping the cattle” of acts of repeal and revision of environmental protection rules during the pandemic. To him society and the press would be “distracted” by the health tragedy of Covid-19. Environmental policy has always suffered from a lack of resources, but what we are seeing is an active attack on the work of environmental agencies that enforce the legislation.

The answer to this setback is the strong pressure from environmentalists and, above all, from foreign political and economic agents, such as international investment funds, large multinational companies and governments and parliaments from different countries. International agreements previously signed by the Brazilian government include obligations such as protection and preservation policies, respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and respect for human rights. We are very bad, if we compare what Brazil has committed to and what is happening.

It is in this context of sanitary, environmental, social and economic adversity that we are experiencing, we reaffirm our commitment to social well-being, the reduction of inequalities, the protection of rights, collaborative production, the solidary economy and environmental sustainability. Information, science, technology and innovation make sense if they are linked to these commitments. This is our mission.

This is especially relevant when there seems to be a general expectation of what our common future will be. Will we return to the world that led us to this situation, particularly with environmental devastation? It was that led us to the new epidemics, to global warming and that also fuels social inequality. Or will we be able to learn from our political and moral mistakes? What world do we want to bequeath to our children and grandchildren, and the new generations?

This crossroads of humanity emerges in the discussion about what is hidden under the name "new normal". What will be the new normal? Hopes are now focused on the development of antiviral vaccine. Dozens of initiatives are running to immunization that will facilitate the return and will hide the conflict. Brazil enters this competition with human guinea pigs, which does not even guarantee us a place at the table of the beneficiaries of the new product. The pharmaceutical industry operates with the logic of the market and the rich are buying in advance their immunity against virus.

Only the solidarity of the excluded, of those who do not have the recognition of their human dignity, is able to face power and money. Only built solidarity, which is not given, can get us through structural and short-term difficulties. The combination of P2P with innovation has this purpose, of creating opportunities, loopholes and doors for a better and less threatened life.

Good reading!

Rio de Janeiro, September 16, 2020

Clóvis Ricardo Montenegro de Lima
Editor